



NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE

Western Region Notes

DECEMBER 4, 2003

REGIONAL DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

Western Region Offices Receive High Upper Air Rankings: Congratulations to Glasgow, Medford, and Elko for being ranked 3rd, 4th, and 5th respectively overall in the National Weather Service 12-month Upper Air performance ranking. The rankings are based on timely submission of reports, data quality control and balloon ascension heights.

AROUND THE REGION

WFO Sacramento Participates in Geography Days: WFO Sacramento staff were featured speakers at Geography Days, a week-long program co-sponsored by Sacramento City College and the National Geographic Society. A room of students and educators were led through a study of how California's terrain affects winds, fires, and floods. Although the college draws heavily from the local area, many of the students were unaware of the area's history of floods and fires and did not understand the role the nearby mountains in this process. The WFO is working with the college geography department as part of their participation in the AMS Online Weather Studies curriculum.

WFO Elko Participates in Career Days: On November 17-20, forecasters from WFO Elko participated in four separate high school career day events sponsored by the school districts of northeast Nevada. These events support the NOAA cross-cutting priority to engage, advise, and inform our customers about agency services, programs, and careers. WFO Elko has been participating in this series of CWA-wide career days for the past several years.

Forecaster Tim Sedlock and WCM Paul Eyssautier briefed 73 students in 5 different briefings during the Ely High School Career Day on November 17. Lead Forecaster Larry Whitworth and SOO Steve Apfel provided NWS career information to approximately 50 students at the Elko School District Career Day on November 18. On November 19, HMT Troy Marshall and WCM Paul Eyssautier set up a display and answered student's questions at the Battle Mountain Career Days. Forecaster Roger Smith and Meteorologist Intern Brandon Peloquin met with 66 students to discuss future NWS careers at the Winnemucca Career Days on November 20.

Winter Weather Awareness Week at California WFOs: Weather Forecast Offices in California conducted "Winter Weather Awareness Week" activities during the week of November 17-21. WFO San Francisco Bay Area disseminated daily Public Information Statements over AWIPS and on NOAA Weather Radio - each detailing a particular winter weather hazard. All statements were also faxed to local media and OES officials.

At least one local TV station (KION 46 in Salinas,CA) had “winter weather” segments on the evening news that corresponded to the daily themes of the NWS statements. Each publication was also prominently displayed on the office web-site.

Staff members of WFO San Francisco Bay Area participated in four county-wide winter weather briefings during the week with the total attendance nearing 200. Participants included members of state and county OES and community agencies, including the American Red Cross, water resource agencies, and utility companies. Many local “first responders” were also in attendance. Presentations given at these winter briefs included detailing the official NWS climate outlooks for the coming winter, a review of the current ENSO/MJO/PDO analysis, and the NDFD and its many possible useful applications.



Picture of the week: Does WFO Medford have an official uniform???

Khaki pants and light blue shirts seemed to be the uniform of the day in Medford before the holidays officially began. This pair of meteorologists came to work one morning without coordinating uniforms. Dan Weygand, left, and Mike Stavish are in rare form on a cold rainy-snowy day in Medford.

SPOTLIGHT ON DIGITAL SERVICES

Starting with this edition of staff notes, a new section will appear highlighting digital service activities within the region. Why single out digital services? The National Weather Service is committed to *delivering a credible, timely, and relevant suite of seamless forecast products and services*. In order to accomplish this goal, we are exploiting new technologies and transforming our traditional products and services to a digital based operation. WFOs and Regional Office Divisions are devoting significant resources and energies to make this transformation happen. This section will highlight these activities. We encourage all staff to contribute their ideas and accomplishments with us, so we may share with others. We start off this new section with several items that emphasize recent field outreach activities in the desert southwest.

NDFD a Big Hit With California Emergency Managers (MSD) : On October 13-16, 2003, WCM's from NWS Offices serving California attended the California Emergency Service Association annual conference, held this year at Lake Tahoe. The focus of this year's conference was the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) in emergency management. To compliment this conference theme, the NWS staffed a booth to provide printed and live web information about the National Digital Forecast Database (NDFD) and how NDFD can be used in GIS applications. Interest in the NDFD booth was very high and the WCMs who staffed the booth did extensive outreach on the topic. Over 45 CDs of the NDFD download software were handed out to emergency

managers interested in applying the NDFD in their jurisdictions. The WCMs who attended the conference plan to make follow-up visits with emergency managers in their local County Warning Areas to explore additional opportunities and applications for using the NDFD.

NDFD Potential Tool to Help Communities Mitigate Drought Impacts in Desert Southwest (MSD):

Andy Bailey (WCM, WFO Las Vegas) provided an NDFD presentation to a team of Las Vegas Valley Water District employees charged with developing improved daily water demand forecasts. Making better forecasts for water management is especially critical at this time, given the long term drought affecting the region, continued explosive population growth in the Las Vegas Valley, and subsequent falling Lake Mead Reservoir levels. The Las Vegas Water District team said that NDFD would allow them to better forecast water usage across the valley, and as a result, they are now working to incorporate the NDFD grids into their water demand forecasts.

Internet Access to Gridded Weather Data to Aid Search and Rescue along the Colorado River (MSD):

Andy Bailey (WCM, WFO Las Vegas) recently met with Milton Rasmussen and Donald Klinkner, two National Park Service Kayak Patrol volunteers, to demonstrate Internet access to gridded weather data. These two volunteers perform safety patrols and search and rescue operations by kayak from Lake Mead to Lake Mohave, including the segment of the Colorado River which runs in-between.

Rasmussen stated, "Accurate forecast information, especially wind, is critical to our efforts. We sure don't want to paddle for miles into the wind -- it's like trying to run up a steep hill. Knowing expected wind speed and direction for our locations helps us plan our operations and routes." Klinkner, referring to the matrix-style forecasts available on NWS web sites, added that the NDFD is, "Just what we are looking for - especially the hourly data."

METEOROLOGICAL SERVICES DIVISION

Statement of the Week: The "Statement of the Week" comes from WFO Spokane. The watch was issued by Tracy Cox, General Forecaster, who produced the applicable portion of the grids, wrote the AFD/WSW, and coordinated with Missoula. While Jon Fox, Lead Forecaster, handled the remaining portion of the forecast product suite. WFO Spokane's use of assigning only the critical portion of the forecast periods to one forecaster allowed them to focus on the upcoming hazardous weather and still devote sufficient resources to handle the exiting storm system. In this case, the time periods and assignments of the forecasters changed as the watch phase evolved into the warning phase. Average winter storm warning lead time for the mountains was 14 hours, well over the regional goal of 10 hours. A great innovative approach to workload sharing from WFO Spokane!

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WSWOTX

IDZ001-004-WAZ037-271200-
NORTHERN PANHANDLE-CENTRAL PANHANDLE MOUNTAINS-NORTHEAST

MOUNTAINS-INCLUDING THE CITIES OF...COLVILLE...DEER PARK...
 NEWPORT...METALINE FALLS...KELLOGG...WALLACE...ST MARIES...
 SANDPOINT... BONNERS FERRY... CLARK FORK
 300 PM PST WED NOV 26 2003

...WINTER STORM WARNING FOR TODAY CENTRAL PANHANDLE MOUNTAINS
 HAS EXPIRED...

...WINTER STORM WATCH HAS BEEN ISSUED BY THE NATIONAL WEATHER
 SERVICE FOR FRIDAY THROUGH EARLY SATURDAY MORNING...

SNOW WILL OCCUR OVER THE WATCH AREA DURING THE DAY FRIDAY AND
 INTO EARLY SATURDAY MORNING. SNOW COULD BECOME HEAVY AT TIMES
 INTO FRIDAY NIGHT WITH ACCUMULATIONS POSSIBLY REACHING 3 TO 5
 INCHES OVER THE VALLEYS BEFORE CHANGING TO RAIN FRIDAY
 AFTERNOON. SNOW LEVELS WILL RISE ABOVE 4000 FEET FRIDAY
 AFTERNOON WITH SNOW AMOUNTS POSSIBLY REACHING 6 TO 14 INCHES
 OVER THE MOUNTAINS BY SATURDAY MORNING. WINDS OVER THE HIGHER
 ELEVATIONS WILL BE FROM 25 TO 35 MPH AT TIMES CAUSING BLOWING AND
 DRIFTING SNOW.



The Marine User's Group is briefed on how marine forecasts are developed at WFO Monterey.

First Marine User's Group Meeting Held in

Monterey: WFO San Francisco Bay/Monterey held its first "Marine User's Group" meeting on October 30. The purpose of this meeting was to provide users of NWS marine weather data and forecasts on the central California coast an opportunity to give direct feedback to NWS personnel. The group also received a briefing on the different types of data available to forecasters, and how NWS produces marine forecasts. This initial meeting established a very positive working relationship with a cross-section of WFO Monterey's marine customers. Future meetings are planned about every four months to provide

direct feedback on marine products and services to WFO Monterey forecasters, and also to continue to reach out to customers in the marine communities of the central California coast.

Fish Expo Northwest: On November 20-22, Western Region staff participated in Fish Expo Northwest, held in Seattle, Washington. Fish Expo is one of the largest annual marine expositions in the United States, bringing together boat owners/operators (primarily commercial fishermen), marine researchers, product distributors, service



NWS Participants in "Fish Expo Northwest": Ted Buehner (WFO Seattle), Jeff Lorens (WRH), Eddie Zingone (WFO Anchorage), Allen Kam (WFO Seattle), Aimee Devaris (ARH), and Lee Chesneau (Ocean Prediction Center). Not pictured are Pat Bradow (PMO-Seattle) and Jim Prange (WFO Seattle).

providers, government (including other NOAA agencies and the U.S. Coast Guard), and others in commercial marine operations. Over 9,000 people participated in this year's event.

WFO Seattle operated an information booth for the event, with additional staffing provided by Western Region Headquarters, Alaska Region Headquarters, WFO Anchorage, and the Ocean Prediction Center. The NWS staff emphasized its marine weather products and services (coastal, offshore, and high seas) and distributed pamphlets and answered questions concerning a wide variety of other weather products and services. A laptop computer with an internet connection provided real-time display and

demonstration of NWS forecast products.

HYDROLOGY AND CLIMATE SERVICES DIVISION

CPC Experimental Two-Class Seasonal and Monthly Outlooks: CPC just started producing a two-class monthly and seasonal forecast. This is in contrast to the current products, which are based on a three-class system (above, near, and below normal). The new two-class outlooks are actually derived from the three-class forecasts and simply look at the probability of above or below the mean for temperature and median for precipitation. With the two-class system, the probabilities are higher (50/50%), and no longer 33 1/3, 33 1/3, and 33 1/3%. If you would like to comment on this experimental two-class system, please send them to Andrea Bair.

You will find the new experimental products at:

http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/predictions/long_range/two-class.html

SCIENTIFIC SERVICES DIVISION

New Learning Management System (LMS) Students: Western Region Headquarters paid for and signed up 40 new students for the DOC/NOAA/NWS LMS Netg/Skillsoft courses and 18 new students for the Karta/IT security courses. Access for these new students began on December 1, 2003. Western Region now has 101 e-learning students in the Netg/Skillsoft courses and 77 e-learning students in the Karta/IT security courses.

Rsync GFE Grids: Maurice Smiley and Kirby Cook drafted instructions to modify the transmission of the GFE grids from the office to the web farm. Rsync provides a more robust and reliable solution. The deadline is December 31 for making this change.

Web GFE Verification: Chris Gibson (WFO Salt Lake City) released a beta version web interface to the WR gridded verification. This is an action from the IFPS workshop. A final version that each office can download will be coming soon.

Web Page Privacy Statement: NWSH requested that each site link to a new privacy policy page and make a slight change to the link title. This needs to be completed by December 15. Ed Ridley sent out an email providing specific instructions.

SYSTEMS OPERATIONS DIVISION

IT Security Actions: Western Region field offices have been doing a great job completing the latest round of IT security actions that needed to be completed in a short amount of time. These actions required timely attention to some new material and applications and updates to previous actions. We appreciate the efforts of all involved to continually improve our security measures.

STAR Training: A “Train the Trainer” session is scheduled for all WR ESAs during the National ESA conference being held in Las Vegas. Each of the ESAs will now be able to provide STAR training to the Office Safety focal points and all other interested office personnel.

NWR: A new All Hazards NOAA Weather Radio receiver was announced by WFO Seattle on December 4. The Weather Radio Olympia Transmitter has been moved to Capital Peak, near the state capitol. Residents in south Puget Sound and southwest Washington can now more clearly hear NOAA Weather Radio Olympia. The new transmitter is a cooperative effort between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and South Sound Broadcasting. The station retains its VHF-FM frequency of 162.475 MHz, but now broadcasts about 1,000 feet higher than its former transmitter site at BawFaw Peak, west of Chehalis. The enhanced reception area now has expanded weather radio service into Hood Canal, south Puget Sound, east Grays Harbor County, and as far east as Mt Rainier National Park.

In addition, three new All Hazards NOAA Weather Radio transmitters have been installed. Castle Dale, UT and Bridgeport, CA were both USDA funded transmitters and were installed before winter set in. Both areas are prone to heavy snow conditions. The cooperator-purchased Marine Transmitter on Mt. Soledad was installed during the San Diego Wildfires. This transmitter will provide Marine weather to the growing boating community in San Diego.

SAFETY: Take the SAFETY ATTITUDE QUIZ. Answers will be in the next Staff Notes:

- 1) If you don't take safety seriously, you don't hurt anyone but yourself
 - a. true
 - b. false
- 2) Having a positive attitude toward safety includes:
 - a. using the personal protective equipment provided
 - b. taking shortcuts to complete a job
 - c. fooling around on the job
- 3) Most work accidents are caused by
 - a. unsafe equipment
 - b. careless, unsafe acts
 - c. unlabeled chemicals

4) If you've done a job many times without an accident, you can skip steps without any risks.

- a. true b. false

5) Being upset or angry can create a poor safety attitude because:

- a. it distracts you from your job, making risky mistakes more likely
- b. you annoy other people
- c. it might cause you to take time off from work

6) Every employee should take personal responsibility for every employee's safety.

- a. true b. false

7) An example of taking the right attitude toward safety is:

- a. know which safety rules aren't important
- b. indulge in horseplay only when your supervisor isn't around
- c. know and follow safety rules and work procedures

8) When you can't remember a particular safety procedure, you should

- a. guess
- b. ask
- c. leave work

9) If you spot a possible safety hazard, you should

- a. assume someone else will handle it
- b. ignore it
- c. fix it or report it

10) One way to demonstrate a positive safety attitude is to

- a. get involved in fixing or reporting safety problems before they become big problems
- b. take safety posters home
- c. criticize people who follow safety rules